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PAGE 1 SAIGON 3535

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S E C R E T SAIGON 3535

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
REVIEWED BY Joan Szuberg DATE 10/6/81
RDS ☐ or XDS ☐ EXT. DATE
TS AUTH. REASON(S)
ENDORSE EXISTING MARKINGS ☐
DECLASSIFIED ☑ RELEASABLE ☑
RELEASE DENIED ☐
PA or FOI EXEMPTIONS

1. I CALLED ON GENERAL THIEU AUG 19 FOLLOWING HIS RETURN FROM A SWING THROUGH II CORPS. HE WAS IN RELAXED FRAME OF MIND

AND SAID HE HAD JUST FINISHED A SESSION WITH A NUMBER OF AMERICAN CORRESPONDENTS (REPORTED SEPARATELY).

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2. THIEU SAID THAT HE WAS NOT SURE THAT HE WOULD WIN, NOTING THAT IT IS VERY DIFFICULT TO JUDGE VIETNAMESE OPINION BY ANY SUCH SYSTEM AS A GALLUP POLL. THE VIETNAMESE ARE DISINCLINED TO EXPRESS THEIR VIEWS PUBLICLY ESPECIALLY TO STRANGERS. HE THOUGHT THAT MANY VOTERS WOULD ONLY MAKE UP THEIR MINDS AT THE LAST MINUTE. HE SAID THAT IN ANY CASE, WHATEVER GOVERNMENT WAS ELECTED, HE WOULD SUPPORT IT; IF A CIVILIAN TICKET WERE TO BE ELECTED HE WOULD RETURN TO THE ARMY AND WORK PATRIOTICALLY FOR THE COUNTRY.

3. I GAVE THIEU COPIES OF THE PRESIDENT'S REMARKS AT HIS AUG 18 PRESS CONFERENCE REGARDING THE ELECTIONS AND ALSO READ HIM

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SOME EXCERPTS FROM THE MORE BALANCED PRESS COMMENT EMINATING FROM THE US IN RECENT DAYS. I REFERRED TO SENATOR JAVITS' SPEECH SUGGESTING A FOUR-WEEK DELAY IN THE ELECTIONS AND SAID THAT OF COURSE THIS WAS THE OPINION OF A PROMINENT SENATOR BUT NOT A STATEMENT OF US GOVERNMENT POLICY. THIEU SAID HE ENTIRELY UNDERSTOOD THIS.

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4. THIEU SAID THAT HE THOUGHT IT WOULD BE VERY UNWISE TO POSTPONE THE DATE FOR ELECTIONS. IN THE FIRST PLACE VIET-NAM IS A SMALL COUNTRY AND ALL THE LEADING CANDIDATES HAVE BEEN WELL-KNOWN THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY FOR A GOOD MANY YEARS. IN THE SECOND PLACE AN EXTENSION OF THE CAMPAIGN WOULD GIVE THE VC ADDITIONAL OPPORTUNITIES TO CARRY OUT TERRORIST ATTACKS AND TO INTENSIFY THEIR EFFORTS TO DISRUPT THE ELECTIONS. (COMMENT: I SHUDDER TO THINK OF THE DIFFICULITIES INVOLVED IN TRYING TO KEEP THINGS ON THE TRACK FOR ANY EXTENDED PERIOD. THERE IS PLENTY OF OPPORTUNITY IN THE NEXT TWO WEEKS FOR THINGS TO GO WRONG. I THINK THIEU'S POINTS ARE WELL TAKEN AND I THINK IT WOULD BE MOST UNWISE TO EXTEND THE CAMPAIGN PERIOD.)

5. THIEU WENT ON TO SAY IN CONNECTION WITH THE PRESIDENT'S PERSONAL MESSAGE AND HIS PRESS CONFERENCE REMARKS, THAT HE WOULD MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO SEE THAT THE ELECTIONS WOULD BE HONEST AND THAT THE PEOPLE UNDERSTOOD THAT THERE WOULD BE NO PRESSURE AND NO INTIMIDATION. HE SAID THAT IF THERE WERE VIOLATIONS THE GOVERNMENT WOULD BE PREPARED TO ACT, BUT THAT THEY MUST HAVE PROOF OF THESE VIOLATIONS IN ORDER TO DO SO.

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6. I MENTIONED SPECIFICALLY THE CHARGE WHICH HAD BEEN MADE THAT MILITARY PERSONNEL WOULD ACTUALLY BE ABLE TO USE TWO BALLOTS (STATE 22384). THIEU SAID THIS WAS ABSOLUTELY FALSE. THE VOTING-AGE MEMBERS OF FAMILIES OF MILITARY PERSONNEL WILL RECEIVE BALLOTS THROUGH THE CIVIL AUTHORITIES IN THEIR HOME DISTRICTS. MILITARY PERSONEL THEMSELVES WILL RECEIVE THEIR BALLOTS

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FROM CIVILIAN
AUTHORITIES ONLY THROUGH THE MILITARY ROSTER AND WILL EXERCISE THEIR VOTES ON STATION.

7. I ASKED THIEU WHETHER HE AND THE PRIME MINISTER WOULD BE MAKING ANY JOINT APPEARANCES WITH THE OTHER CANDIDATES,

AYING THAT I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE DESIRABLE IF THEY WOULD SINCE I HAD HEARD SOME CRITICISM OF THEIR FAILURE UNTIL NOW TO DO SO. THIEU SAID THEY WOULD PLAN TO MAKE SOME APPEARANCES IN SAIGON AND NEARBY AREAS, PROBABLY THREE SUCH APPEARANCES IN ALL.

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8. I TOLD THIEU THAT I HAD HEARD SOME REPORTS THAT THERE MIGHT BE TROUBLES RAISED IN AUGUST 20 BY THE BUDDHISTS, SINCE IT WAS BOTH BUDDHISTS ALL SOULS DAY, AND THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE 1963 PAGODA RAIDS. THEIR SAID HE THOUGHT THERE WOULD BE SPEECHES BUT HE DOUBTED THERE WOULD BE ANY DEMONSTRATIONS.

9. I TOLD THIEU ABOUT THE MEETING WHICH GENERAL WESTMORELAND, KOMER AND I HAD HAD WITH KY, VIEN AND THANG, TO DISCUSS RVNAF REORGANIZATION AND PACIFICATION. I MENTIONED THAT KY HAD SAID THAT THIEU WAS IN AGREEMENT WITH THE VIEWS PUT FORWARD THERE. THIEU INDICATED HIS AGREEMENT WITH THE VIEWS PUT FORWARD THERE. THIEU INDICATED HIS AGREEMENT BUT ASKED FOR MY OPINION ABOUT THE PROPOSED NEW ROLE FOR THANG. I TOLD THIEU THAT I THOUGHT THE IDEA WAS A GOOD ONE AS THE RF/PF NEEDED IMPROVEMENT IN QUALITY AND TRAINING. I SAID THAT I THOUGHT IT WAS A CONSTRUCTIVE MOVE, ESPECIALLY AS THANG WOULD ALOW KEEP CONTROL OF RD CADRE TRAINING. (COMMENT: THIEU WAS NON-COMMITAL REGARDING THANG AND I JUDGED THAT THERE MAY STILL BE SOME DIFFICULTY IN RELATIONS BETWEEN THEM. IT WILL BE RECALLED THAT THIEU WAS QUITE BITTER AGAINST THANG DURING THAT PERIOD WHEN THE THIEU-KY RIVALRY WAS AT ITS PEAK.
BUNKER

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